



SYNERGY WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

(207) 807-7208
www.synworkforce.com
51 Murray Dr. Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107

April 24, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1627 – An Act Regarding Workforce Development, Education Reform, and Talent Retention.

As Managing Partner and co-founder at Synergy Workforce Solutions, I bring nearly two decades of experience in workforce strategy, education-to-employment alignment, and employer engagement. My professional background includes early roles in career and technical education recruitment at Universal Technical Institute and WyoTech, followed by national leadership at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America as Senior Director of Workforce Development. There, I spearheaded partnerships with Fortune 500 companies and secured resources to expand local and national career pathway initiatives. In Maine, I have continued this work through Synergy Workforce Solutions, where I lead efforts to help employers align training infrastructure with labor market needs, strengthen recruitment pipelines, and improve workforce retention through customized strategy and regional collaboration. I also chair the Manufacturers Association of Maine's committee on workforce development, Employee Growth Services.

My work continues to focus on bridging the gap between education and industry in meaningful, measurable ways. LD 1627 reflects the kind of pragmatic, data-informed policy that can truly make a difference.

This legislation addresses three systemic issues that have persisted across our state:

1. Students are not being adequately prepared for real-world opportunities.

Recent data shows only 26% of Maine's 8th graders are proficient in reading and just 25% in math. Meanwhile, 43% of first-year community college students require remedial math, and half of all Maine students who enroll in college do not complete it. These outcomes aren't just academic metrics — they highlight a growing disconnect between classroom learning and future application. At the same time, students lack early exposure to the wide variety of career paths available across Maine's evolving economy.



SYNERGY WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

(207) 807-7208
www.synworkforce.com
51 Murray Dr. Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107

2. Our current system funnels students into narrow pathways, limiting their awareness and options.

According to the ECMC Group's "Question the Quo" survey, 74% of students feel pressured to attend a four-year college, while more than half prefer applied, hands-on learning. Yet only 13% feel prepared to make informed career decisions, and only 22% report receiving information about careers in the trades or technical fields. LD 1627 seeks to change that by introducing Career Pathway Awareness programming in middle school, and by requiring at least one work-based learning experience before high school graduation. This empowers students to explore, test, and better understand the options that align with their interests and strengths.

3. Employers are willing to invest, but our policy structure doesn't always make it easy.

Our workforce ecosystem is fragmented. LD 1627 removes barriers by incentivizing employers to participate in the pipeline — through tax credits for student loan repayment and childcare, and relocation stipends for employees taking jobs in underserved areas. These provisions not only support workforce retention but also make Maine a more attractive place to live and work.

Importantly, LD 1627 accomplishes all of this without new spending. It is fiscally responsible and strategically reallocates underutilized funds to initiatives that produce measurable outcomes.

In closing, LD 1627 is not about steering students into specific tracks — it is about ensuring they are exposed to real opportunities and equipped to pursue them. It's about relevance, readiness, and retention. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you for your service and your continued commitment to Maine's future.
Sincerely,

John Lewis, Managing Partner & Co-founder